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ABSTRACT

Since every teacher is a teacher of reading, several skills and understandings should be a part of every beginning content teacher's preservice training. A secondary teacher's reading background should include a knowledge of a general theory of reading, an overview of basic reading skills, training in book-reading skills, training in the psychology of study, an understanding of the role of rate in reading, an understanding of corrective and remedial reading, training in the selection of materials, and training in the skills of classroom questioning. The mastery of these skills will enable the teacher to incorporate reading instruction in her program as a tool to help her reach her instructional goals. (AL)

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PRESERVICE TRAINING IN READING

FOR THE SECONDARY-LEVEL CLASSROOM TEACHER

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The Role of Reading in Teacher Training

Essentially, teacher-training consists of two parts: curriculum--the "what" of teaching--and instruction--the "how." Curriculum courses attempt to bridge the gap between the true disciplines--History, Literature, Biology, and Physics--and the actual instructional programs offered in the schools. Instruction courses tie together what we know of children--how they learn, how they grow and mature--with the best of what we know about teaching technique, classroom management, and pedagogy generally. Methods courses in Reading clearly fit into this second category.

Within instruction, however, there exist at least three types of "Methods" courses: (1) those that deal with certain subject-matter areas, like Methods of Teaching Mathematics: (2) those that deal with certain

instructional techniques, like Methods of Audio-Visual Instruction; and (3) those that deal with certain groups of learners, like Methods of Teaching the Mentally Retarded. In terms of these groupings, the position of methods courses in Reading is not so precise.

To the elementary teacher, a course in Reading is essentially of the first type: a basic introduction in how to teach a clearly-defined subject she'll deal with every day and with every child. To the specialist in Reading, her courses are probably of the third type: specialized training in how to deal with a particular kind of child with a particular, atypical set of problems. To the secondary content-teacher, however, Reading courses fall best into the second category: tool-courses that enable her to function effectively in reaching her goals, but not really ends in themselves. It's to this point, then, and in terms of this definition of a Reading course, that I'd like to direct the remainder of this paper.

Reading as a Tool for Teaching and Learning

Very clearly, our schools as they exist today are "reading" schools. Despite the progress made over the past years in audio-visual instruction, experience curricula, programmed learning, and computer-assisted instruction, the majority of children in America still get most of the information they acquire in school via the route of hard, cold print. Marshall McLuhan's dire prophecies notwithstanding, the book is still with us, and undoubtedly will continue to be with us for a good long time. Particularly at the secondary-school, no substitute so far has surpassed the old-fashioned textbook in terms of cross-professional acceptance as the key information-giving source for group instruction. Though few teachers today rely solely upon the textbook, for even fewer have films, television, and recordings

come to be much more than supplemental aids. Though most teachers regularly enrich their classroom presentations with non-print media, their old standby is still the book. This means at least two things, both important to the concerns of this symposium: (a) that book-reading skills still remain the student's major tool for learning, and (b) that the teaching of students how to go about these skills is still the teacher's major way of facilitating that learning. Thus, an introductory course in the teaching of reading is not an "extra" to be slipped into in-service or graduate-study for the experienced teacher, but rather a basic tool course to be made part of every prospective teacher's general pre-service training program.

A Reading Course for the Secondary Teacher

Our first step, then, is to identify the major needs of the secondary teacher in terms of reading methodology. How much background in reading does a beginning teacher need, and of what types? My feeling is that at least nine or ten topics of study are essential.

A General Theory of Reading. First of all, since reading is such a key part of each pupil's overall pattern of educational progress, every teacher who assigns printed material to be read should have a basic theoretical understanding of how the reading process takes place. Only through a thorough grasp of the cognitive, linguistic, and experiential prerequisites of reading can a teacher fully appreciate the continuing role of readiness for learning throughout a pupil's entire school career. This unit in a basic reading course draws heavily upon the supporting disciplines of linguistics, psychology, and sociology, and should never be shorted to get too quickly to what some may call more "practical" concerns. Many students tell us that never before, in all of their methods courses, have they ever truly "brought together" the insights from these various fields in the way they do when they

attempt to draw together the multitude of factors inherent in the process of reading. Perceived from this molar viewpoint, vocabulary-building becomes concept-building, critical reading becomes thinking, and varying degrees of reading-readiness come clean as simply reflections of differing experiential backgrounds and social and cultural settings. Nothing is so practical as good theory, and it absolutely should not be neglected in a basic reading course.

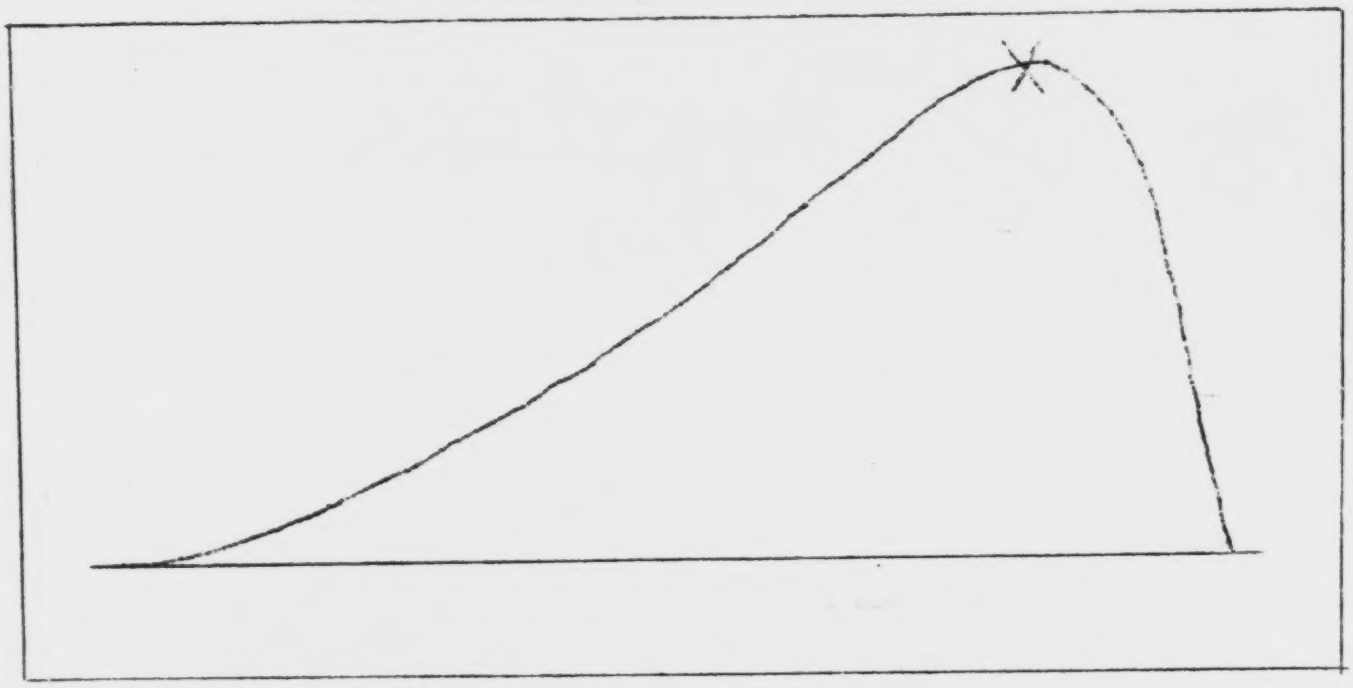
An Overview of Basic Reading Skills. Building upon this, next should come what might be referred to as a "mini-course" in developmental reading: an introduction to word-recognition skills, an overview of the general and specific skills of literal comprehension, and at least a good survey of the advanced skills in reading. This sort of unit is extremely important because it gives the prospective teacher an overall mental model of reading development against which she can then measure the range of reading skills she finds in her classes. Individual differences in reading ability get greater as children move up the grades, not fewer, and teachers must clearly comprehend this if they're to accommodate for these differences in their daily instructional procedures. I'm certainly not suggesting that we put phonics charts in our Physics laboratories or a tachistoscope in every Typing room, but I am suggesting that every teacher be at least fairly well acquainted with what has gone on before--or in many cases is still going on--in terms of each pupil's gradual growth in reading abilities and skills.

Training in the Book-Reading Skills. This portion of an introductory reading course could perhaps be called simply "textbook technique": how to use the parts of a textbook, how to use the author's organizational aids, how to use a textbook as a source of information, rather than as one would

a novel or a collection of short stories. Most children get the bulk of their early training in reading in narrative materials: basal readers, anthologies, and stories, poems and plays. Thus, the transition in secondary-school to straight exposition--the stock-in-trade of the textbook editor or author--can come as a jarring experience to them. The overall organization of the two types of material are actually antithetical, and every secondary teacher has a major responsibility for helping her students bridge the gap between the two styles of expression.

To illustrate, the typical short story, novel, or play could be portrayed like the long, sloping left-hand side of a Guassian Curve (Plate 1).

Plate 1
The Narrative Style of Development

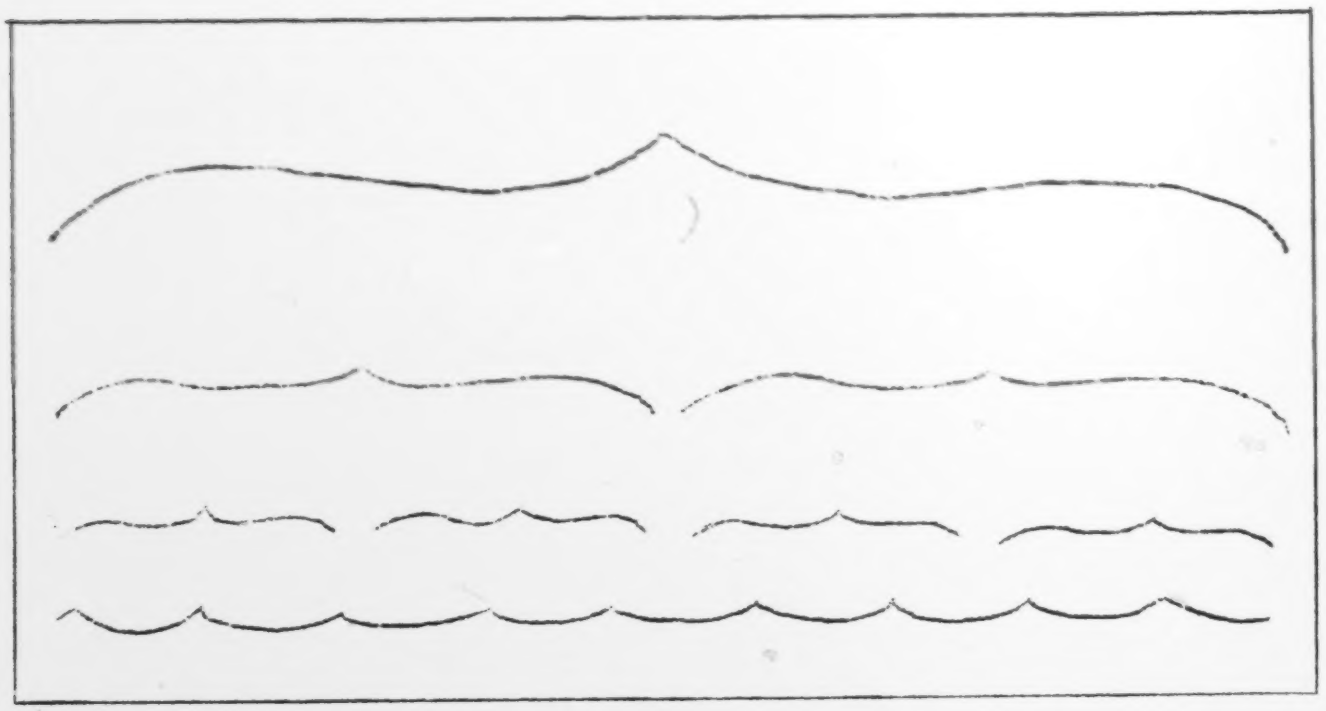


The story builds and builds, the reader being drawn along by dropped clues, catchy phrases, and figurative, compelling language, 'til finally the boy gets the girl, the good guys win the war, or man triumphs over nature and it's all over.

Expository writing, on the other hand, is more like a series of waves (Plate 2), with each wave representing a paragraph embodying a main idea

Plate 2

The Expository Style of Development



and a set of supporting details, and the brackets above them representing sub-section, section, chapter, and unit organization. Though both styles of expression hopefully get to the same place ultimately--the development of a cohesive set of ideas--each takes a different route; and the teacher who deals daily with each type of material is the one best situated for pointing out the way.

Training in the Psychology of Study. A fourth topic of study important to the effective teaching of any secondary-level subject-matter course is in the area of study skills: how we learn when the teacher isn't directing our every move, an area that could be referred to as "learning when the learner is in the driver's seat." I definitely feel that every teacher is duty-bound to be able to respond clearly and directly to the

common question of "Just how should I study for your course?" This means that the teacher should be aware of what research tells us about how to organize material for good retention, how to take tests, how to order one's time, and how to review; in general terms, then, HOW TO STUDY.

In my courses, I suggest that pupils be taught Francis P. Robinson's SQ3R study system or some variant of it. Probably the two best books on this topic are Professor Robinson's Effective Study and Walter Pauk's How to Study in College. Time after time, students in my Secondary Reading Methods courses have told me not only that these books have helped them answer the study-questions of their students, but that they, themselves, feel downright cheated that they were never given such a system to help them through their own schooling.

An Understanding of the Role of Rate in Reading. Another topic always of interest to students, probably because of the ubiquity of commercial rate-training courses available today, is speed-reading. Prospective teachers want to know, and so do the students in their classrooms, of just what significance rate should be in their reading. Most authorities feel that flexibility of rate should be our main concern, with different purposes for reading and different types of reading material determining just how fast or how many times one should read a particular selection. This topic fits well into or with a unit on study-skills, since varying rate with purposes and materials is a key concept there. Overall, however, we can't forget that increase in base reading rate per se can be a valid goal, too, in this day and age of greater and greater reading demands on us all.

An Understanding of Corrective and Remedial Reading. Here, too, is an area where all teachers should have at least a sensitivity to and an awareness of more specialized reading methodology, even though they may

never actually practice it. Just as a teacher may never actually teach speed-reading, but should still be able to give common-sense answers to questions pertaining to it, so should she know at least a little bit about remedial and corrective techniques, even though she may never actually give an individual diagnostic test or compile an individual case study with recommendations for remediation. In both cases, referral responsibilities are still hers, and so her knowledge of the two areas should be equal at least to this.

Actually, of course, corrective techniques can often be utilized within the regular classroom, sometimes eliminating the necessity for true remedial measures. For most beginning teachers, however, this probably is deeper than a pre-service course ought to go, and can be better postponed until after the teacher's had a year or two of actual classroom experience.

Training in the Selection of Reading Materials. Of more daily use, though perhaps somewhat in the field of general pedagogy and curriculum, is the selection of teaching-learning materials in terms of their reading difficulty and interest to various groups of students. At the eleventh grade, for example, the middle eighty percent of a typical class contains readers varying almost ten grade-levels in reading ability--from about middle seventh-grade level to a solid seventeenth. This means that any teacher attempting to meet the needs of all her class must regularly select several levels of treatment for each topic to be covered. To do this, reading methodology offers her readability formulas, cloze technique, and several informal ways of appraising the difficulty of reading materials. No child learns the concepts behind words and sentences he's fighting to barely pronounce and comprehend, so such selection techniques can be very valuable, particularly for the young teacher who's not yet familiar enough

with her field to know about all the non-reading media available or not yet self-assured enough about classroom control to attempt complete individualization of instruction.

Training in the Skills of Classroom Questioning. Another topic often dealt with in introductory reading courses, though it, too, is closely related to general pedagogy, is the problem of skillful classroom questioning during socialized recitation periods and general classroom discussion. Since a major portion of such verbal interchange occurs after and in response to reading, this range of skills, too, falls into our domain.

To provide prospective teachers with a mental model for questioning behaviors, in my class I rely upon Norris Sanders' book Classroom Questions: What Kinds? Sanders' seven-step hierarchy of types of questions, closely adapted from the well-known Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, clearly fits into the rubric of a Directed Reading-Thinking Activity or any other reading lesson plan. Beyond this, the beginning teacher must necessarily polish and hone her questioning techniques on-the-job, but as an overall model, at least, Sanders' hierarchy is far superior to a "Now what did we learn today?" approach.

"Other" Reading-Related Pedagogical Problems. A good many other reading related classroom problems could, of course, be cited: the teaching of vocabulary, clearly a task for every teacher; the developing of "critical" reading abilities, whether one sees this term in its Social Science context of propaganda-detection or its Literary context of deep structure and symbolism; the teaching of good reference-reading skills; and the motivating of broad recreational reading for personal fulfillment and entertainment. But to deal with all these and the many more we could possibly conceive would amount to our studying the entire literature of reading, or at least

the course outlines of a dozen or so of our best teachers of methodology. What I've attempted here, instead, has been simply to erect a basic skeleton: a short list of essential skills and knowledges designed to equip a beginning classroom teacher to function in a reading-oriented classroom. In-service training, graduate study, and the continuing help and advice of good consultants and supervisors must take over from here. As this symposium's format has indicated, many levels and types of reading personnel are needed if today's reading instruction is to meet the needs of today's readers and their problems. The teaching of reading does belong in every classroom, and every teacher is a teacher of reading.